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ABSTRACT

Clarity of written expression is prized highly in the university curriculum and in the societal arena. Professors need to study, analyze, and appraise diverse recommended philosophies in teaching writing. An existentialist writing curriculum should: include extensive input from students on topics, forms of writing to be emphasized, and planning of the writing curriculum; encourage students to write about their subjective feelings about the human condition; and encourage their interest in the absurd and ridiculous. A problem solving writing curriculum emphasizes selecting a problem, gathering data, forming and testing a hypothesis, and making necessary revisions. A third philosophy of writing emphasizes use of behaviorally stated, measurable objectives, and stresses predetermined ends for student attainment. Five agreed-upon principles or guidelines for learning from the psychology of education are: (1) meaningful learning is important; (2) university students must be able to use what has been taught; (3) interest in writing--a must--is stimulated by interesting learning opportunities; (4) university students need to perceive purpose in writing; and (5) students need guidance to appraise their own progress in writing. (SR)

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WRITING IN THE UNIVERSITY CURRICULUM

Writing, the third of the three r's, must be developed continuously in the formal school years as well as in society. Clarity of written expression is prized highly by all presently in the university curriculum and in the societal arena. Viable goals need to be established for higher education students to attain. Optimal progress for each learner should be an end result. Creativity is a major goal to emphasize; Templeton[1] wrote the following pertaining to modern fantasy:

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> This genre combines fantasy and reality but does so with logic and consistency. Consider, for example, the worlds created and developed in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit and in C.S. Lewis's Narnia books (the most famous being The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe). Stewig expressed in part the challenge to the authors of modern fantasy: "If, in the universe the author has imagined, the frogs can speak English, there had better be a good reason why the horses cannot. Or if the goats are wearing trousers, why are the pigs' bottoms exposed to the air?" (Stewig, 1988, p. 509). As with much of traditional literature, modern fantasy is a literary playground on which primal themes are played out. Think of the range of themes and issues addressed by the now classic Narnia tales, for example: good versus evil, the existence of God, a Christ figure, growing up, and interpersonal relationships...

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Philosophy of Writing Instruction

Professors need to study, analyze, and appraise diverse recommended philosophies in teaching writing. The

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philosophy of writing instruction implemented should guide each student to achieve as much as possible. First, existentialism stresses that individuals need to make choices to be human. The individual chooses, from among the many alternatives available. Choices made are subjective, not objective. Thus, truth is in the eye of the beholder.

Purposes in life are not given but must be discovered by the individual. He/she is born and then continuously attempts to find purpose or reasons for living and life. Existentialists tend to believe that life itself is ridiculous and absurd, not rational. Through the irrational, one must find purpose and morality. Human beings determine the kind of society they desire to live in. An open-ended world is in evidence. No predetermined (a priori) standards, rules, and regulations exist. All are human made in time and place.

To emphasize an existentialist writing curriculum, the professor needs to:

1. have students select topics to write about.
2. Allow learners an open-ended curriculum as to the form of writing to be emphasized. Thus, the written product can be prose or poetry. If poetry, for example, is chosen, the type needs selection by the learner, be it free verse, diamante, or tanka, among others.
3. Permit student and professor planning of the writing curriculum. As much input from learners, as is humanly possible, needs implementation.
4. Encourage students to write about their subjective feelings pertaining to the human condition.
5. Stimulate learner interest in the absurd and

ridiculous involving life and living.

A second philosophy of writing instruction is to emphasize students write to solve problems. In society, problems abound. Each needs clear identification. The problems can be personal and/ or social. Once the problem chosen possesses clarity, data need collecting in answer to the problem. A variety of reference sources should be utilized to provide for individual differences. The answer to the problem is tentative, in hypothesis form. Since the hypothesis is tentative, testing needs to be done in the societal arena. Revisions may then be needed, as a result of testing and evaluation.

Professors stressing a problem solving writing curriculum attempt to link the university curriculum with the utilitarian in society. Practical writing situations are then in evidence. Each facet of problem solving needs quality writing, be it the stating of a problem, data/ information gathering, hypothesis development, testing the hypothesis, and making revisions if needed. Content and mechanics of writing must meet vital criteria. Quality ideas, not the mechanics, always are a first consideration in writing.

A third philosophy of writing emphasizes use of behaviorally stated objectives. Each objective is precise, clear, and leaves no leeway for interpretation. Either the university student does or does not attain any one objective

as a result of instruction. The professor may arrange the objectives in ascending order of complexity for sequential attainment by students.

Prior to instruction, the professor announces clearly the objective(s) to students for achievement in one or more lessons. Students then know what is to be acquired within a lesson. The focal point is upon learners achieving the salient, not the trivial. After instruction, the professor appraises if students have been successful in goal attainment.

Since the instructor sequences the precise objectives for learner achievement, a logical writing curriculum is in evidence. Logically, from the easier to those increasingly more complex, objectives are ordered for instruction by the professor.

Behaviorism advocates using measurably stated objectives in the writing arena. The stimulus (S) emphasizes items of instruction. The response (R) stresses responding by students to content covered in instruction. The stimulus and the response (S--R) become integrated, not separate entities. Reinforcement through primary and secondary reinforcers strengthens the bonds between the stimulus and the response. High grades on written products and test scores assist in connecting the S with the R in S--R theory of writing instruction. A tightly sequenced curriculum guides optimal student progress. Thus a

university student moves forward continuously in writing achievement in small steps, carefully ordered by the professor. Pertaining to behaviorism (realism in the curriculum), Ozmon and Craver[2] wrote:

> Contemporary realists emphasize the importance of scientific research and development. The "Scientific Movement in Education" has been accomplished primarily since 1900 and has brought about the advancement of knowledge in the psychology and physiology of education, and developmental approach to education. This movement has also been largely responsible for the extensive use of IQ tests, standardized achievement tests, diagnostic tests, and competency tests. Curriculum has reflected the impact of the movement in the appearance of standard work lists, homogeneous grouping of students on the basis of intelligence, and standardized and serialized reading textbooks. The movement has also spawned the application of more precise and empirically based administrative techniques. Perhaps a more recent development is the growing extent to whcih computer technology is used in the schools. While these developments have often met with sharp resistance and counterattacks, it seems that this aspect of realism in education has also met with increasing acceptance on the part of many professional educators. Contemporary critics of American education often strike at the widespread use of scientific technology as one of the prime evils in the schools. Others, while less acid in their criticism of technology and science itself, quarrel with the underlying realist theory as being the culprit behind the misuse of science and technology, largely because they think realists are too accepting and uncritical of things labeled "scientific." Whatever the position one wishes to take on the issue, the existence of such an issue is witness to the vitality realist ideas still have.

Agreed Upon Guidelines

In the teaching of writing, professors need to realize that meaningful learning is important. Students then need

to understand what has been taught. If meaning is not attached to ongoing activities and experiences in writing, optimal achievement connot take place. Meaning theory stresses comprehending specifics as well as generalizations in writing.

Second, university students must be able to utilize what has been taught. The criterion of use means that new content acquired can be used in a sequential writing activity. Thr writing instructor must teach for student use of facts, concepts, and generalizations taught in writing.

Third, interest in writing is a must. Instructors need to provide interesting learning opportunities so that the student and the writing curriculum become one, not separate entities. A variety of materials be it basal textbook use (multiple or single series) and/or audio-visual materials must be utilized to provide for individual differences among learners. Set establishment focuses student attention on what is salient in an interesting manner. Deductive and inductive methods should be utilized in teaching/learning situations to further secure learner interests in the writing task. Too frequently, professors assume that university students will learn and achieve in writing regardless of materials and methods utilized. The professor might well be a published writer in refereed journals, but can he/she stimulate interest within students for writing? The professor is hired to <u>teach</u> writing to others. This

includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes of desiring to guide learners to become proficient writers in the curriculum as well as in society. Writing is a life-long endeavor that needs continuous honing. It is a process of becoming and not having arrived at a destination. Thus writing in and of itself has no end, save further achievement and growth in this skill. Once interest has been secured, effort will be forthcoming in the writing arena.

Fourth, university students need to perceive purpose in writing. To perceive purpose means to accept reasons for engaging in a variety of activities to encode ideas meaningfully in abstract form. Encoding stresses writing abstract symbols to develop written communication in an acceptable, purposeful manner.

Fifth, university students need guidance to appraise their own progress in writing. Self evaluation can make for quality appraisal of progress in writing. Appropriate criteria need to be utilized in the appraisal process. Self evaluation implies not only evaluating quality of written product, but also the processes involved therein. Facts, concepts, and generalizations acquired need evaluating in terms of accuracy and comprehensiveness. Processes must be assessed as to the utilization by the student of critical and creative thinking, as well as problem solving. In addition to products and processes, attitudes also need

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assessment. Wholesome attitudes assist learners to achieve quality products and processes of writing. A desire to improve, grow, achieve, and learn is vital in the attitudinal dimension. A life-long desire to write and develop proficiency in the higher education writing curriculum is a must. Quality writing in all academic disciplines and classes is vital, salient, and significant.

Professors also need to evaluate written work carefully of each student. Criteria of excellence must be used to assist each student to attain optimally.

In Summary

The art and science of writing must receive increased emphasis to help each student make continuous progress. Individual development requires optimal achievement in writing. The societal arena stresses the need for all to communicate effectively in the utilitarian and the practical.

The following philosophies are important to emphasize in providing for individual differences:

1. Existentialism with heavy input from university students into the writing curriculum.
2. Problem solving strategies with writing activities emphasizing selecting a problem, gathering data, achieving an hypothesis, testing the hypothesis, and making revisions if needed.
3. Measurably stated objectives with its stress upon predetermined ends for university student attainment.

Agreed upon principles of learning from the psychology of education which need implementation include:

1. Meaning theory to make writing experiences understandable and comprehendable.
2. Making use of what has been learned, be it utilitarian or aesthetic.
3. Developing interest within university students to become good writers.
4. Initiating purpose in writing whereby reasons are accepted for achieving objectives.
5. A quality program of evaluation of writing progress should be in evidence.

Pertaining to computer use in reading and writing, Harp and Brewer[3] wrote:

> When microcomputers first came on the scene, many teachers thought the devices were going to be the answer to all of education's ills, just as the teaching machines and programmed instruction of the 1960s were once thought to be a panacea. Computers have been in... classrooms for years now, but they have not always been usd effectively or in ways that are consistent with out understandings of the reading and writing processes. Those who viewed reading as a set of subskills to be mastered and orchestrated into literacy viewed the computer as a glorified workbook (Newman, 1984). Programs were developed to provide drill and practice in the subskills of reading and writing. Most of the software currently available in the language arts is a product of this subskill-oriented view of the reading and writing processes, probably because execises of this type are relatively easy to program.
>
> However, there are programs emerging that allow the use of the computer in ways that recognize the holistic nature of reading and writing. Computer programs that encourage...to make predictions, confirm those predictions, and draw on their own background knowledge in constructing meaning are much more consistent with our view of the reading process than are the drill-and-practice programs. The new programs lend themselves to cooperative learning experiences because groups of students can work together to make predictions about story events.

Word processing systems have clear linkages to the teacher's reading/writing program. As we implement instruction in writing as a process, the ease with which...can edit work on a word processor greatly enhances the richness of their writing. The word processor makes it easy...to take control of their writing and rework a piece with little effort, allowing them to concentrate on the message rather than on the medium. Teachers who have observed...painstakingly trascribing each word manually, with great effort, have to appreciate the freedom word processing brings to the act of writing.

Selected References

1. Templeton, Shane. Teaching the Integrated Language Arts. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991, page 339.

2. Ozmon, Howard and Samuel Craver. Philosophical Foundations of Education. Fourth edition. Columbus Ohio: Merrill Publishing Company, 1990, pages 63-64.

3. Harp, Bill and Jo Ann Brewer. Reading and Writing, Teaching for the Connections. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1991, pages 165-166.